



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

EVOLUTION, IMMORTALITY AND THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION: A REPLY.

BY GOLDWIN SMITH, D.C.L.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S paper, "Some Conclusions of a Free-Thinker," derives weight and interest from the character as well as from the ability of the writer. It will be gratefully received by all who believe that the only way out of our religious difficulties is free inquiry, and that honest doubt is the dawn of truth. For my own part, I advance no theory, but only plead for perfect freedom of inquiry, unfettered by ecclesiastical tests, and, at the same time, for the recognition of the whole nature of man, including that part of it which has hitherto been deemed spiritual, as well as the bodily part, which Darwinian Evolution explains.

Among all the changes of this changeful age, the most momentous is the withdrawal, by literary criticism and physical science, of the foundations of revealed religion. If the Bible is not authentic and inspired, we are left without supernatural assurance of the will, the nature, the unity, the existence of God. Of the divine will and purpose we have now no assurance more direct than that which we may gather from our own nature, and from the indications of a universe in which good is mysteriously mated with evil, love wrestles with hatred, beauty and melody contend with deformity and discord, and order, apparently providential, holds divided empire with disorder and wreck. The geocentric idea, making this earth of ours the grand scene, with the sacred tradition that depended on it, passes away. The earth, our dwelling-place, is an atom in a boundless universe. The revolution has been sudden, and owes its suddenness, and in a measure its danger, to the suspension of free inquiry by church creeds and tests. Less than half a century ago, I heard a great geologist desperately struggling to reconcile his science with the

narrative of Genesis, which his audience, an academical audience, still believed to be inspired. Social disturbance follows. Religion, even if not active or fervent, has helped to reconcile the less fortunate of mankind to their lot by their general belief that the social frame was a divine ordinance, and that there would be a better world for them hereafter.

In place of creation and the religious view, Mr. Chamberlain would embrace "the stupendous evolutionary theory" of the world, though what lies behind Evolution, what power or influence first put its laws into operation, he regards as an insoluble mystery. The change is obviously vital. Creation presents itself as the work of an intelligence. Religion accounts for the existence of evil as probationary, resistance to the evil being a training of humanity to good. Evolution, so far as we see, or can divine, is blind; the evil in it apparently is purposeless. But how terribly large is the proportion of evil! Comparing the number of those who are or have been happy, with the number of those who are or have been unhappy, can we say that the great pessimist was very far wrong in calling this the worst possible—he did not say the worst conceivable—world? Mr. Chamberlain seems to regard Evolution as certainly proved. When science has pronounced judgment in her own domain, I dare not breathe a doubt. But has any case of Evolution really occurred within human ken or record? Artificial changes have been made by men or by special influence in the animal and vegetable world. But has there been any natural change such as the evolution of the ape into man? Rudimentary similarity, such as that of the ape to man, does not seem conclusive proof of Evolution. We are in the full tide of a grand discovery, to settle the exact limits of which time may be required. In the mean time, Evolution, while it displaces, apparently does nothing to replace, the theistic doctrine of creation or the moral corollaries of that belief. It gives no clue to origin or agency. It is simply a record of observed succession.

Together with Evolution, Mr. Chamberlain apparently embraces Necessarianism, which indeed seems involved in Evolution. He probably accepts the belief that motive is the sole antecedent of action, in which case certainly Necessarianism would be true. I have ventured elsewhere to submit that there are really two antecedents, motive and volition, the second of which

becomes perceptible as often as we hesitate in action. Has any Necessarian ever been found to act on his own doctrine?

A special, and perhaps the most striking, feature of Mr. Chamberlain's essay is his denial of the immortality of the soul. That belief he holds to be not only unproved and incapable of proof, but less acceptable than the opposite doctrine which, he says, puts a quietus on the painful and gloomy thought of a system of future rewards and punishments which has so long harassed the world, besides making life more unselfish as being lived without hope of reward. His own life, we may be pretty sure, has been happy as well as good; but what is to be said about the myriads whose lives, through no fault of their own, have been misery ending in pain? There is no use in trying to disguise annihilation as "eternal rest." In rest we still live, and from it we at length awake. Annihilation is surely a sad word, were it only that it means final separation from those we love. If death ends all, it levels not only the most virtuous with the most depraved, but the greatest benefactors with the greatest scourges of mankind. In Mr. Chamberlain's case, the renunciation of all interest beyond the grave might be unselfishness; but in most cases it surely would be rather greed of immediate enjoyment.

The question is, perhaps, somewhat prejudiced by the use of the words "immortality" and "soul." Of immortality, as of eternity, we can form no conception. To "soul" has become attached the idea of an entity distinct from the bodily frame, pent up in it, and released from it when the body is dissolved by death. "Indiscriptible," Butler calls the soul, building an argument for its immortality on that quality. This we give up, as we do all ghosts and spiritual apparitions. Actual proof, from the nature of the case, we can have none; but, assuming that the Supreme Power is just, we have a strong presentiment of justice, not done here, to be done hereafter. We can hardly, with Mr. Chamberlain, treat Wordsworth's poem on "Intimations of Immortality" as philosophy, but it embodies a sentiment almost universal and deeply rooted in our nature.

We have apparently no absolute reason for setting a boundary at the line at which physical science so far stops; for excluding from view that which has been hitherto recognized as the spiritual, and recognizing only the bodily part of our nature. Even as concerns what we must regard as belonging to the bodily part,

memory and dreams, physical science has still realms to conquer.

Mr. Chamberlain, as he tells us, to the end of his life attended places of Christian worship, and, as he certainly did it not for show, he must have been drawn by the moral attraction. Yet he not only disrates Christianity, but disparages it, seeming inclined to put it even below the religion of Brahmanism, caste, suttee and Juggernaut. The miraculous part of the Christian creed rationalists will resign; but it is the halo with which the simple imagination surrounds the head of the founder, prophet or apostle, and does not necessarily affect the truth or purity of the moral code. Pliny sends Trajan a description, furnished him by the Christians, of the proceedings at their meetings. According to this account their custom was to come together on a stated day before dawn, sing a hymn to Christ, as God, and bind themselves, sacramentally, not to anything criminal, but never to commit thefts, robberies or adulteries, never to break faith or repudiate a trust. Here the belief in the divinity of Christ does not lower, but raises, the standard of morality. Jesus Christ was ideal morality; not so was Baal, Woden or Mahomet. The Paradise of Mahomet is sensual.

Christianity in the centuries following its foundation was attacked by a number of evil influences from which, sadly as it was affected by them, its essence may be clearly distinguished; by dogmatism, the offspring of Alexandrian philosophy, which begins to show itself in the Fourth Gospel; by sacerdotalism and prelatism, increasing as the clergy rose in social rank; by Oriental asceticism, culminating in Simeon Stylites; and by court influence, commencing from the time when the conversion of Constantine made the Emperor lay head of the Church, and the martyr gave place to the sycophant and the intriguer. Persecution, while it called forth the heroism, must, at the same time, have stirred the fanaticism and embittered the temper of the persecuted sect.

But a worse thing than all happened when the suzerainty of Christendom was usurped by the Popes. Catholicism, it is most important to remember, is not Papacy. Augustine, Ambrose, Irenæus, Athanasius, were Catholics, but they were not Papists; nor were Lacordaire, Acton and their circle of liberal Catholics in our own day. Gregory the Great was not a Papist; he recognized the ecclesiastical parity of Constantinople and Antioch

to his own See, and though circumstances, especially the downfall of the Empire and the withdrawal of Imperial government and protection, led to his exercise of temporal power at Rome, he never pretended to suzerainty. There is nothing of it in his unfortunate Epistle of Congratulation to the usurper Phocas. He does not pretend to confirm the title of Phocas.

The personal and essentially anti-Christian, though fanatical, ambition of the monk Hildebrand, Gregory VII, imposed on Western Christendom the Papal suzerainty, laying its foundations in an alliance with Norman conquest, and in the strict enforcement on the clergy of celibacy, which, severing them from society, made them a sacerdotal caste and a militia devoted to the Pope. The wild Normans, invited to Rome, opened the temporal reign of the Papacy with massacre. They conquered England under Hildebrand's banner; they afterwards invaded Ireland, made over to them by Gregory's successor as a Papal fief. Civil war was stirred up in Germany for Papal objects. There followed the extermination of the Albigenses, the Inquisition, Alva's butcheries in The Netherlands, the Saint Bartholomew massacre, the extirpation of the Huguenots, and, what perhaps was worst of all, Jesuitism, which still vexes the world with its intrigues. Science was banned as infidel and persecuted in the person of Roger Bacon; while sacerdotal dogmas, such as Transubstantiation, Purgatory and the worship of Saints and relics, were pressed to an extreme.

But for the acts of the Papacy, Christianity, Catholic or Protestant, has not to answer. Genuine Christianity meantime was not without witnesses, such as Anselm, Grosseteste, Wycliffe, Thomas à Kempis and in the secular sphere St. Louis and Edward I. The Reformation and the Churches and characters which Protestant Christianity has produced, together with its missions, are surely strong proofs, not only of the vitality, but of the ethical value, of the religion. We see that they have had force to keep a hold to the last on the sentiment of such a man as Mr. Chamberlain, able and highly educated as well as good, on whom the hold of dogma had been utterly lost.

The age is big with discoveries, psychical as well as physical. Old men cannot look for certainty; they can only hope to die in hearty allegiance to truth.

GOLDWIN SMITH,